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ABSTRACT

The use of vocational assessment instruments with Texas special needs students was investigated as part of the requirements of the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act. A nonrandom sampling method was used to identify the population. Transition from School to Work Coordinators in each of 20 regions collected 130 completed survey instruments from district respondents responsible for vocational assessment. Educational diagnosticians, vocational assessment coordinators, transition specialists, and special education department chief executives were the most frequent responders. Aptitude tests, interest measures, combination instruments, and work samples were used for the study. Based on the information reported in the study, five conclusions appear warranted: (1) individuals with different titles appear to be responsible for vocational assessment in Texas; (2) a wide range of instruments are reported as being used, especially in aptitude and interest categories; (3) respondents often listed instruments in incorrect categories or with incorrect names; (4) respondents were not uniformly satisfied with the instruments they were using; and (5) there appears to be much room for improvement in the vocational assessment process. (The document includes nine tables and two appendices: the survey form and letter to vocational special needs program transition coordinators.) (NLA)

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Career Assessment Instruments Used With Students with Special Needs in Texas

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Paper presented at the annual meeting of the

American Vocational Association

Los Angeles, California

December 9, 1991

The authors wish to thank Eleanor Mikulin and Robert Patterson of the Texas Education Agency (TEA) Vocational Education staff for their assistance with this research. Note, except where necessary to reflect the language in the Carl Perkins Acts of 1984 and 1990, the authors use the term "persons with disabilities" to refer to "the handicapped" as suggested in the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) of 1990.

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Background

The purpose of this study was to investigate the actual use of vocational assessment instruments with students with special needs as part of the requirements of the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act (CPA) (P.L. 98-524). These requirements designate some of the funds provided to each state by the Act be set aside for handicapped (10%) and disadvantaged (22%) students. In addition, the CPA also requires that handicapped and disadvantaged students enrolled in vocational programs receive an "assessment of their interests, abilities, and special needs with respect to completing successfully the vocational education program".

Given that the CPA has been in effect for approximately five years it is likely that most school districts and community colleges that receive federal vocational education funding have been meeting the vocational assessment requirements of the Act. However, because of the sheer magnitude of the effort, it is just as likely that the level of implementation to date is short of totally satisfactory to either those responsible for, or those receiving, this service.

There are several reasons why these requirements may have presented difficulty at the local level. First of all, including disadvantage students in the requirements represented a totally new approach to serving this group. While it had been common practice to assess all students with disabilities for the purpose of establishing an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), this was not necessary for disadvantaged students. Also, there have been many more disadvantaged students than students with disabilities

enrolled in the public schools, both secondary and post-secondary. The inclusion of the disadvantaged in this requirement is further complicated by the distinction made in the Act between, and among, the academically and economically disadvantaged, as well as the limited English proficient (LEP) student.

A second reason this assessment requirement may have been hard to implement well, is the shortage of individuals who are knowledgeable of, and skilled at, administering the many instruments that may be used with the diverse clientele included under the handicapped and disadvantaged rubic. From the magnitude of the task it is evident that many individuals had to become involved in both the administration and the interpretation of assessments if the outcome of this enormous effort was to result in anything of worth to the individual assessed.

It is with a recognition of the difficulty of carrying out the vocational assessment provisions of the CPA and because of the need to know which instruments appeared to work well enough to be in use today that this study was undertaken.

Method

Population and Sample

The population of interest in this survey was all individuals who were responsible for carrying out vocational assessments under the CPA in Texas. Because of the difficulty of identifying all of this population for the purpose of selecting a representative sample, it was decided to use a non-random sampling method that would guarantee a degree of geographic representation. Since Texas is divided into 20 regions with

Educational Service Centers for each, it was decided to select a sample by requesting the Transition from School to Work Coordinators in each center to distribute the surveys to those in each district responsible for vocational assessment. This process resulted in a total of 130 completed survey instruments from a cross-section of respondents. Table 1 lists both the position title and frequency of response for each position. It can be seen from the table that educational diagnosticians (45), vocational adjustment coordinators (18), transition specialists (13), and special education department chief executives (11) were the most frequent responders. Given the preponderance of special education personnel responding, it is likely that the resulting survey information is biased in the direction of assessments of persons with disabilities.

Instrumentation

The survey used in the study was developed jointly by several Texas Education Agency (TEA) vocational education staff and Texas A&M University vocational education faculty. The format included simple directions concerning who was to complete the survey and what instruments should be listed under each of the following categories: aptitude tests, interest inventories, combination instruments, work samples, and other instruments. For each instrument listed, a space for an opinion regarding each instrument was provided. In addition, space was provided for instruments not currently used, but under consideration and for additional comments. The first page, which included the directions, also requested the name of the person completing the survey, the position they held, and their school district name

and regional service center number. A copy of the first page of the survey is included as Appendix A.

Procedure

As previously described, a letter accompanying the survey instrument was mailed to the Transition Coordinators at each of the 20 Educational Service Centers. The letter requested that the Transition Coordinator duplicate and distribute the letter and the attached survey form within their region to persons responsible for vocational assessment of students with special needs. It was stressed that all instruments used should be listed even if the category was not known. The letter was sent out on March 4, 1991 with a request to return it to the authors at Texas A&M University by April 15. The letter was signed by two TEA staff members and two Texas A&M University vocational education faculty who had agreed to analyze and report the results of the survey. A copy of the letter is included as Appendix B.

The responses were tabulated by TAMU vocational education staff, and instruments were moved to their appropriate category when that could be clearly determined. Comments were summarized.

Results

The results of the survey are reported in Tables 2 through 7. It can be seen from Table 2 that in the aptitude category the CAPS (40), OASIS (38) and DAT (17) are by far the most used. In the case of OASIS, which includes an aptitude and interest measure, it is not known how many are used for aptitude or interest only or for both. For this reason, OASIS appears, as reported, in three categories: aptitude, interest and combined.

Interest measures are reported in Table 3 where it can be seen that the RFVII (40), OASIS (31), COPS (30), WRIOT (22), and PIC (18) were the most frequently listed. Combined instruments, presented in Table 4, most frequently used were Apticom (35), McCarron-Dial (28), locally developed student, parent and teacher interview surveys (23), and OASIS (15). In the area of work samples (Table 5) the TAPS was most frequently used (22) followed closely by the PAS (18) and locally developed measures (14).

Instruments listed in the other instrument category (Table 6) are of two types. Some of these instruments are neither aptitude or interest measures, but assess such things as work adjustment competencies. Examples of these include the SPIB (13) and SSSQ (6). The other type of instrument listed in this category are those which were originally listed here, and which were not easily identifiable as belonging in another category. In many cases, these names were not recognized as a commercially available instrument. They may be incorrect names for instruments that are well known, or they may be relatively obscure, new or locally developed measures.

Table 7 represents the answer to the question of what instruments are under consideration for use in the future. Listed here are many of the instruments on the other lists, but no clear pattern is apparent.

While comments were provided by some respondents to many of the instruments listed in all of the tables, these were too varied to include in this paper. The responses themselves, however, can be categorized and are listed in Table 8. It can be seen from the table that, aside from the designation from very

poor (1) to very good (5), these comments cover a wide range of positive and negative feedback. General comments were also summarized and appear in Table 9. It is difficult to summarize these comments, but they can be roughly divided into positive, negative and oblique statements about individual instruments or the vocational assessment process.

Conclusions

Based on the information reported in the survey, the following conclusions appear warranted:

1. Individuals with many different titles appear to be responsible for vocational assessment in Texas.
2. A wide range of instruments are reported as being used, especially in the aptitude and interest categories. However, some instruments did emerge as most preferred or high use.
3. Those who completed the survey often listed instruments in incorrect categories or with incorrect names. There appears to be a great deal of uncertainty about what the instruments listed actually are designed to measure.
4. Judging from the comments about individual instruments, the respondents were not uniformily satisfied with the instruments they were using. Also, no instrument emerged as always being uniformly positively rated.
5. Based on the general comments provided, there appears to still be much room for improvement in the vocational assessment process.

Table 1

Position of Respondents to Vocational Special Needs Assessment Survey in Texas

Position	Frequency
Assessment Clerk/Counselor/Coordinator	3
Bilingual/ESL	1
Career Counselor	1
Counselor	4
Director/Supervisor	6
Educational Diagnostician	45
Instructional Supervisor/Specialist	3
Resource Teacher	2
School Psychologist	7
Special Education Counselor/Coordinator	6
Special Ed. Dept. Chair/Coordinator/Director	11
Special Education Teacher	3
Support Specialist	1
Transition Specialist/Coordinator	13
Vocational Adjustment Coordinator (VAC)	18
Vocational Counselor	3
Vocational Evaluator	2
Vocational Rehabilitation Coordinator	1
TOTAL	130

Table 2

Aptitude Instruments Used in Vocational Assessment in Texas

Name	Frequency
Adult & Adolescent Psychoeducational Profile	1
Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB)	6
Bennett Hand-Tool Dexterity Test	1
Career Ability Placement Survey (CAPS)	40
Crawford Small Parts Dexterity Test	1
Differential Aptitude Test (DAT)	17
General Aptitude Test Battery (GATB)	4
Haptic Visual Discrimination Test	1
Locally Designed	2
Minnesota Rate of Manipulation Test	2
Minnesota Spatial Relations Test	1
Occupational Apt. Survey & Interest Schedule (OASIS)	38
Peabody Vocabulary Test	1
Pennsylvania Bi-Manual Dexterity Test	4
Personal Test for Industry	1
Purdue Pegboard	4
Ravens Progressive Matrices	1
Test of Adolescent Language (TOAL)	1
Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-Revised	1
Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Rev. (WISC-R)	3

Table 3

Interest Instruments Used in Vocational Assessment in Texas

Name	Frequency
Becker Reading-Free Voc. Interest Inventory (RFVII)	40
Career Choices	1
Career Interest Inventory (CII)	2
Career Occup. Placement & Evaluation Survey (COPES)	4
Career Occupational Preference System (COPS)	30
Career Occupational Preference System II (COPS II)	2
Cronicle Career Quest	1
Geist Picture Interest Inventory	4
Harrington O'Shea Career Decision-Making System (CDM)	2
Informal Inventories (ESC Workshop)	1
Interest Inventory Questionnaire	1
Interest Determ., Exploration, & Assess. System (IDEAS)	8
Judgement of Occupational Behavior-Orientation (JOB-O)	2
KEYE (Developed by Klein ISD)	1
Kuder	3
Locally Developed	1
Occupational Apt. Survey and Interest Schedule (OASIS)	31
Pictoral Inventory of Careers (PIC)	18
Picture Interest Exploration Survey (PIES)	5
Self-Directed Search (SDS)	1
Strong-Campbell Interest Inventory (SCII)	1
Student Occupational Interest Survey (SOIS)	1
Vocational Interest Inventory (VII)	1
Vocational Preference Inventory	1
Vocational Research Interest Inventory	1
Voc. Training Inventory & Exploration Survey (VOC-TIES)	12
Wide Range Interest-Opinion Test (WRIOT)	22

Table 4

Combination Instruments Used in Vocational Assessments in Texas

Name	Frequency
Apticom	35
Career Planning Program	1
Florida Int. Diag. Prescriptive Voc. Competency Profile	1
McCarron-Dial Evaluation System	28
P-MAC System by McCarron-Dial	4
Occupational Apt. Survey & Interest Schedule (OASIS)	15
Student, Parent, Teacher Interview Surveys	23

Table 5

Work Samples Used in Vocational Assessment in Texas

Name	Frequency
Associated Work Skills Checklist	1
Jewish Emp. & Voc. Services Work Sample System (JEVS)	1
Locally Developed	14
Microcomputer Evaluation & Screening Assess. (MESA)	1
Micro-Tower	1
On-the-Job Sampling (Place & Train Model)	1
Prevocational Assessment Screen (PAS)	18
Situational Assessment	2
Skills Aptitude Module (SAM)	6
Talent Assessment Program System (TAPS)	22
VALPAR Component Work Sample System	7
Vocational Information Evaluation Work Samples (VIEWS)	1

Table 6

Other Instruments Used as Vocational Assessments in Texas

Name	Frequency
Career Portfolio	1
Career Profile	1
CASE	1
Comprehensive Vocational Evaluation System	1
Devosine Color Blindness Test	1
Functional Skills Screening Inventory	3
Haptic Memory Matching Test (HMMT)	1
Herman Method Dyslexia Kit	1
Ishibaras Test for Color Blindness	1
LAS I	1
LAS II	1
McCarron Assess. of Neuromuscular Development (MAND)	3
Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI)	1
Oral Language Assessment	1
PACG	1
PAL	1
Perceptual Memory Test	1
PIAT-R	1
PreLAS	1
Prevocational Checklist	2
San Francisco Vocational Competency Scale	1
Scale of Independent Behavior	2
SHARP	1
SIT	1
Situational Assessment (with Videotaping)	1
Social and Prevocational Information Battery (SPIB)	11
Social and Prevocational Information Battery-T (SPIB-T)	2
Special Needs Voc. Assess. (Developed by Joe Green)	1
Street Survival Skills Questionnaire (SSSQ)	6
Tinie Clock	1
TONI	1
Transit by JEVS	1
VACG	1
Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery	3

Table 7

Instruments Not Currently Used But Under Consideration for Use in the Future as Vocational Assessments in Texas

Name	Frequency
Becker Reading-Free Vocational Interest	2
Career Ability Placement Survey (CAPS)	2
Career Occupational Preference System (COPS)	3
Curriculum-Based Assessments	1
Differential Aptitude Test-R (DAT-R)	1
Gordon Occupational Checklist	1
Locally Developed	1
McCarron-Dial Evaluation System	4
Occupational Apt. Survey and Interest Schedule (OASIS)	2
P-MAC (McCarron-Dial)	1
Prevocational Assessment Revised	1
Program for Assessing Youth Employment Skills (PAYES)	2
Skills Assessment Module (SAM)	1
Street Survival Skills Questionnaire (SSSQ)	1
Transit	1
Transition Behavior Scale	1
Voc. Interest-Exploration System (by McCarron-Dial)	1
Woodcock-Johnson Knowledge Cluster	1

Table 8

Assessment Comments Categories

1-Very Poor
2-Poor
3-Fair/Average
4-Good
5-Very Good
6-Works Well in Group Situations
7-Compare Results with Acad. Achievement Scores at Grade Level
8-Results Have Limited Use
9-Easy to Administer/Score
10-Hard to Administer/Score
11-Administration Time Consuming
12-Need Large Room to Administer
13-State Recommended*
14-Not Appropriate for Certain Disabilities
15-Meets State Requirements
16-Expensive

*There is no state recommendation for assessment instruments.

Table 9

General Comments Recorded on the Survey

This is the first year to use Prevocational Assessment Screen and VOC-TIES. They are an inprovement, but I am not sure they give us what we need.

We are very happy with the vocational assessment program. We administer approximately 300 McCarron-Dials/year and approximately 2500-3000 Apticoms/year for special education and disadvantaged students.

We hope to set up a work station at our self-contained special school in the future and may need help with this and designing the work sample forms. We do not have the personnel to administer a vocational assessment more then once. The results obtained at age 14 are not all that useful at ages 16-17 when decisions are being made concerning vocational placement and work programs. Wish the law could be changed to age 16 instead of 14.

_____ ISD contracts with _____ ISD for vocational assessments and services. We give the _____ ISD developed Level I of the assessment and they give the remainder.

I need help in vocational assessment. A summary of this survey would be beneficial.

Need help with vocational assessment of ED students in RTC.

Not able to find aptitude instrument which we feel is appropriate for handicapped students. Have to do group testing so choices have been limited. Need test appropriate for 6th or 7th graders--many of whom are already 14 years old. Also need something for severe MR's.

Please make your information available to school districts.

_____ is considering using all district-designed measurements and no standardized tests.

The parent, student, and teacher interviews are a very important part of our assessment battery.

Have found TAP to be most beneficial for 8th graders, boys especially. Results useful.

Given limited time of school personnel, all instruments should include computer report easily run on Apple or IBM. The reading level required on many interest and aptitude tests should legally preclude their use with H.D. or LEP student populations.

Would be better if vocational testing were done by specially trained personnel--sometimes it is just required paperwork--no valid information--just meets minimum requirements. In special cases, outside personnel has done the McCarron-Dial.

Not happy with OASIS, yet not sure of other options.

Like to see good situational assessment tool. SD,VAC

We contract with MHMR for in-depth voc. testing for our more severly handicapped students. Level III.

Leadership in vocational assessment field by _____ is [a] disgrace! What will you folks do for the good of the cause? Everyone I know in this area is trying to survive. It's a real quagmire.

What we really need is a test for those who can read/ comprehend at the 2nd-3rd grade level. Look into updating Becker Reading-Free [Vocational] Interest Inventory.

Testing more meaningful if administered after at least one year in high school and exposure to VAC-type classes.

Would be interested in combination instrument that does not have high reading level and is more realistic to available jobs--like idea of "hands-on."

Value of vocational assessment depends almost totally on administrator and utilization of results. Students must take testing seriously and counselor/teacher must review results individually, then utilize information for future planning.

It is difficult to place students in vocational programs based on interest and aptitude tests when options in most schools [are] limited.

Survey would have been much easier to complete if format had been checklist with rating scale and additional room for comments. More commonly known instruments could have been listed with room for additions.

Vocational test shows aptitude and interest, but often interest is not in line with aptitude.

The CAPS, COPS, COPES system seems to work well for us, although some instructions are too difficult for special education students; parents like final report. For severly disabled the PAYES seems more appropriate.

District will be encumbering another $5000 in few weeks to double number of work samples.

Vocational Assessment Instrument
Identification Survey

Directions: Persons who are responsible for the vocational assessment of students with special needs please complete the following survey and return it by **APRIL 15, 1991** to:

Linda Parrish
Texas A&M University
Educational Psychology
College Station, Texas 77843

1. Please list the names of all commercial instruments currently being used or considered for use for vocational assessment of students with special needs, including those who are limited English proficient, disadvantaged and/or handicapped. If you are unsure of the category into which they should be placed, list instruments in the category marked "other". **2.** If possible, give a brief evaluation of each instrument listed. **3.** Before each entry, please indicate with which population the instrument is used (e.g., (H) handicapped, (D) disadvantaged or (L) LEP. More than one category can be given if used with multiple categories.

****

Name of person completing survey:_____

Position:_____ ISD:_____

Regional Service Center # :_____

APTITUDE TESTS: **OPINION:**

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

Vocational Special Needs Program

March 4, 1991

Transition Coordinators
Educational Service Centers
Regions 1-20

Dear Transition Coordinators,

In an effort to review and update the list of vocational assessment instruments currently being used or considered to be used with students with special needs we are asking for your assistance. We believe that the collective knowledge and experience of those in the local districts, who actually participate in the vocational assessment process, will be most valuable in preparing such a list.

Please duplicate and distribute this letter and the attached form to those persons within your region who are responsible for conducting the vocational assessment of students with special needs, including students who are limited English proficient, handicapped or disadvantaged. Additional pages can be used if needed. There are categories (e.g., aptitude, interest, etc.) provided for the respondant to use, but we would encourage all instruments to be identified, even if one does not readily know into which category they should be placed. Our staff will determine the placement of those listed in the "other" column. The important thing is to provide a comprehensive list.

Thank you for your cooperation. This information will be of considerable help to those who are responsible for vocational assessment throughout the state. Please send completed forms by **APRIL 15, 1991** to:

Linda H. Parrish
Texas A&M University
Educational Psychology
College Station, Texas 77843

Sincerely,

Eleanor Mikulin
Vocational Education, TEA

Linda Parrish
Voc. Special Needs, TAMU

Robert Patterson
Vocational Education, TEA

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